

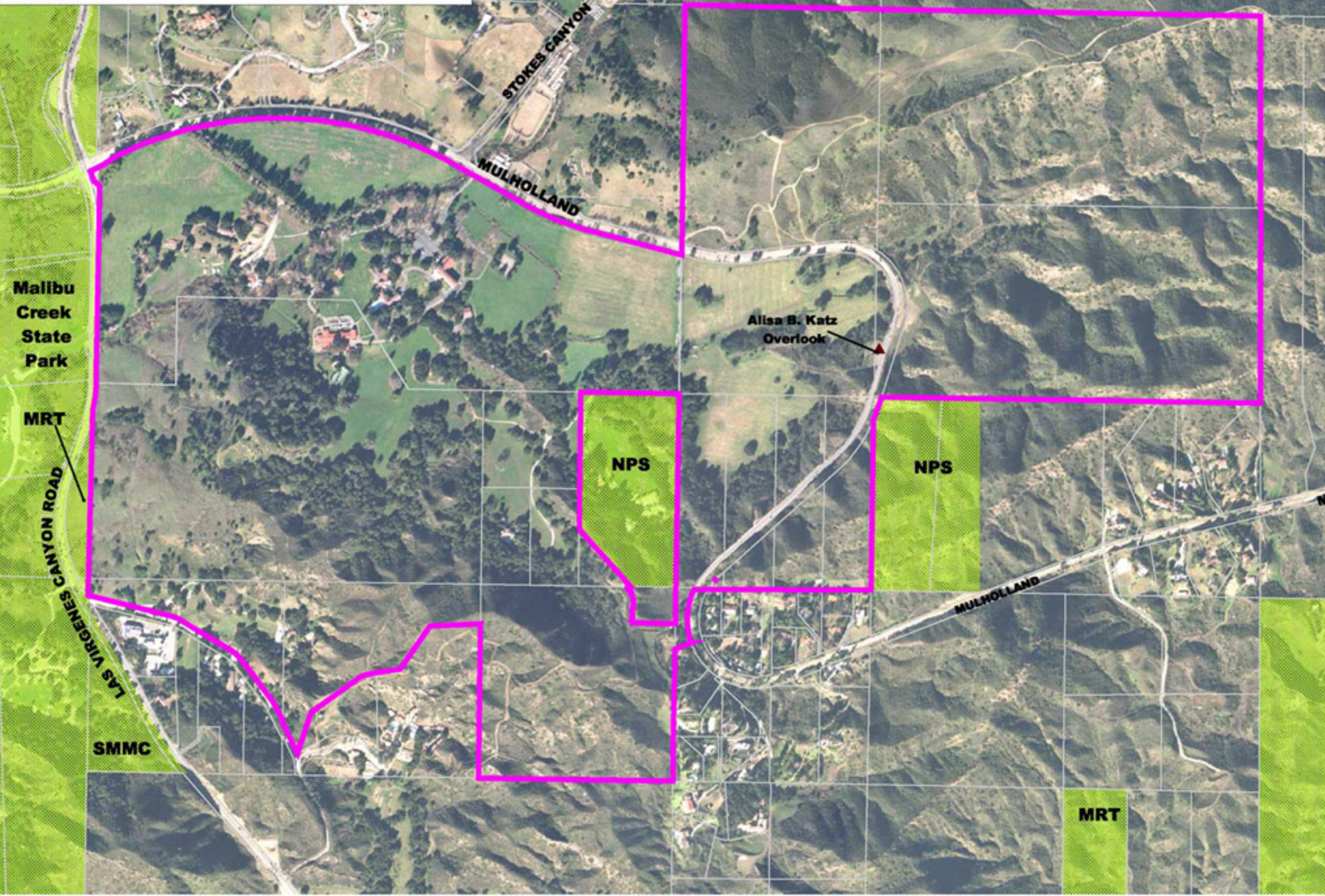
 **King Gillette Ranch (Soka University) Boundary**

 **Protected Parklands and Open Space**

200 0 200 400 Feet



**Agenda Item #11**  
**SMMC**  
**6/14/04**







Steelhead trout



Tidewater goby



Southwestern pond turtle



**Strategic Location of Soka in the Ecologically Significant Malibu Creek Watershed**



# **Soka University**

## **Major Coastal Zone and Watershed Resources**

- **All of the 588 acres currently offered by Soka University are located within the Coastal Zone.**
- **The subject property is located in the heart of the ecologically significant Malibu Creek Watershed by the confluence of five major tributaries.**
- **The southernmost documented population of the genetically unique Southern steelhead trout resides just downstream from the subject property.**
- **The property is a critical component of the central Santa Monica Mountains habitat linkage hub that contributes to both inter- and intra-mountain range wildlife movement.**
- **The property is contiguous with Malibu Creek State Park and extends the 15,000-acre State Park Core Habitat Area over 1.5 miles eastward towards Topanga State Park.**



# **Soka University**

## **Major Cultural and Scenic Resources**

- **Soka University is situated in the heart of the Las Virgenes Valley which is one of the most scenic areas of the Santa Monica Mountains.**
- **The property lies at the intersection of Mulholland Scenic Highway and Las Virgenes Canyon Road, a designated California Scenic Highway.**
- **The site provides critical backdrop to Malibu Creek State Park, the Backbone Trail and numerous other official trails in the Las Virgenes, Stokes, Liberty, and Cold Creek drainages in the Malibu Creek watershed.**
- **The National Park Service states, “Few locations in California offer in one setting the opportunity to interpret and understand a cross-section of California’s rich history, including sites, buildings, and other features that represent Native American settlement, Spanish missions and adobes, Mexican ranchos, California homesteading, and WWII military development.”**
- **The large, prehistoric Native American Chumash village of Talopop occupied the western side of the property.**



# Historical Timeline of Ownerships and Recent Acquisition Efforts

- **Past 7000 yrs.** Chumash occupation.
- **1769-1830's** Mission era; area probably used by Mission San Fernando for grazing.
- **1837** A portion of the property was part of the Rancho Las Virgenes Spanish Land Grant.
- **1898** Edward Stokes homesteads the property; Stokes Adobe still exists on the site.
- **1902** Gustav Kleman homestead.
- **1925** King Gillette, the razor baron, buys the property, commissions Wallace Neff to build the estate's buildings. Gillette is on European tour when stock market crash of 1929 wipes out his fortune
- **1930** Clarence Brown, MGM movie director ("Anna Karina," "National Velvet," "The Yearling,"), buys the property.
- **1952** Bob and Delores Hope may have acquired from Brown, then Delores Hope donates land to the Catholic Church.
- **1952** "Claretville" is seminary for the Claretian Order of the Catholic Church.

- **1976** California Department of Parks and Recreation begins attempts to purchase the property but lengthy process is rendered moot when Claretians sell to another religious group.
- **1979** The Church Universal and Triumphant (with “Guru Ma” Elizabeth Clare Prophet) buys the land from the Claretian order, renames as “Camelot.” National Park Service prepares Sept. 1979 Issue Paper on Claretville setting forth reasons for pursuing acquisition of property for parkland.
- **1982** National Park Service identifies land for acquisition in its Land Acquisition Plan.
- **1986** National Park Service again attempts to acquire for public parkland but is outbid by Soka Gakkai/Nichiren Shoshu of America, which begins plans for major university expansion project.
- **1990** Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, State Parks, and National Park Service join together to begin purchase negotiations with Soka; Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) commissions an appraisal on 245 acres.



- **1990** Soka submits a shared use proposal to the park agencies. Park Agencies offer Soka three alternate sites for proposed university development. Suggestions are rejected by Soka. Soka files with County of Los Angeles, and Los Angeles County public scoping hearings on the Soka development EIR take place. Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) makes two fair market value offers to buy the property from Soka, based on an approved appraisal, but is rebuffed.
- **1990** The Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Park District, the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, and the MRCA boards, and the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, all vote overwhelmingly to empower the MRCA to pursue acquisition of Soka property by eminent domain. The MRCA files an eminent domain action in Los Angeles County Superior Court to acquire 245 acres of Soka property for public parkland at fair market value.
- **1994** MRCA and Soka settle condemnation lawsuit; cost of completing condemnation makes MRCA continuation of the lawsuit impossible.
- **1994** Soka continues to process its land use application with County of Los Angeles.

- **1996** County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Conservancy and Congressman Anthony Beilensen craft a compromise plan with Soka to preserve corridor values; Los Angeles County approves General Plan amendment and Zone change.
- **1998** State Coastal Commission approves Soka's plans. Sierra Club sues County and Coastal Commission over approvals; Soka approvals ultimately overturned.
- **May 2004** Supervisor Yaroslavsky calls on Soka and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to begin discussion about possible sale of 588 acres for parkland.



